

Message Text

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ACTION ITF-05

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L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ISO-00 IO-10 SR-02 ORM-01 VO-03 SCA-01 INSE-00 AID-05

SSO-00 /090 W

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R 050755Z MAY 75

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4832

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 4891

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, VS, HK

SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

1. HKG POLAD ALAN DONALD MET WITH CONGENOFFS THIS MORNING/MAY 5 TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT VIETNAMESE REFUGEE SITUATION IN HONG KONG FOLLOWING THE ARRIVAL OF 4,420 VIETNAMESE ON BOARD THE DANISH MERCHANT SHIP, CLARA MAERSK. DONALD POINTED OUT THE PROBLEMS FACED BY HKG WITH THESE REFUGEES: (A) THE POSSIBLE ADVERSE PRC ATTITUDE TOWARDS VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG; (B) SOME GRUMBLINGS ALREADY HEARD FROM THE CHINESE POPULATION ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHEN CHINESE SWIMMING TO HONG KONG ARE BEING ROUTINELY RETURNED TO THE CHINESE MAINLAND AUTHORITIES; (C) THE COST OF PROVIDING FOR THE REFUGEES AT A TIME WHEN UNEMPLOYED HONG KONG RESIDENTS CANNOT OBTAIN ANY ASSISTANCE FROM HKG SOCIAL WELFARE; (D) THE CONCERN THAT SOME OF THE YOUNG MAKES IN REFUGEE GROUP MIGHT SHORTLY BECOME IMPATIENT IF NO REAL PROGRESS IS BEING SHOWN IN PROCESSING THEIR CASE.

2. DONALD SUGGESTED TWO METHODS WHICH WOULD ASSIST THE HKG IN MEETING THESE PROBLEMS, WHICH HE ASSUMES WILL INCREASE IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE AMOUNT OF TIME THE
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VIETNAMESE REFUGEES REMAIN IN HONG KONG. FIRST, HE

CONSIDERED THAT SOME USG ACTION IN MOVING ALONG THE 67 (58 FROM SWISS AIR FLIGHT AND 9 FROM AIR AMERICA FLIGHT) VIETNAMESE WHO HAVE BEEN IN HKG CUSTODY SINCE APRIL 29-30 WOULD HELP DAMPEN SUCH CRITICISM. SECONDLY, DONALD STRONGLY SUGGESTED THAT THE 4,420 NEW ARRIVALS BE PROCESSED IN GUAM RATHER THAN IN HONG KONG.

3. WE EXPLAINED TO DONALD CURRENT USG POSITION, CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC OPINION PROBLEMS, OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS AT GUAM, ETC. WE ALSO INDICATED THAT WE SAW ICEM PROCESSING OF SHIPBOARD GROUP AS DEFINITE PART OF INTERNATIONALIZING VIETNAMESE REFUGEE PROBLEM AND ENABLING THOSE HAVING CLAIMS ON OTHER GOVERNMENTS THROUGH EMPLOYMENT, RELATIVES, OR WHATEVER, TO PURSUE THOSE CLAIMS. DONALD ACCEPTED THESE ARGUMENTS BUT INSISTED THAT, FROM HKG POINT OF VIEW, THE SOONER ANY REFUGEES WERE MOVED OUT OF HONG KONG THE BETTER AND THAT PERHAPS SOME ACTION ON THE EARLIER 67 WOULD EASE THE HKG'S POSITION ON THE LATER AND LARGER GROUP.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT ANY ACTION WE COULD TAKE REGARDING THE 67 EARLIER REFUGEES WOULD BE WELL APPRECIATED BY HKG AND WOULD ASSIST IN RETAINING CLOSE COOPERATION WE HAVE BEEN DEVELOPING WITH HKG AUTHORITIES ON VIETNAMESE REFUGEE PROBLEM. IT WOULD ALSO ENABLE THE HKG TO INDICATE PUBLICLY THAT AT LEAST THOSE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES HAD REMAINED IN HONG KONG ONLY TEMPORARILY AND THAT THE OTHERS WOULD PROBABLY BE MOVING ALONG TO OTHER RESETTLEMENT AREAS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IN THIS CONNECTION, DONALD INDICATED THAT SWISS AIR HAD INFORMED HKG THAT IT WOULD PAY FOR TRANSPORTATION OF 58 ARRIVING HONG KONG VIA SWISS AIR TO GUAM OR OTHER DESTINATION.
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